IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
ORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION

SUIT NO.3861 OF 1991

Bharat Kalyanji Dattani and ors. ..Plaintiffs.
Vs.
Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. ..Defendant.

None appears for the plaintiff.

Ms. S.I. Shah for the Defendant.

CORAM : A.M.KHANWILKAR, J.
DATE : 25th October, 2007.

P.C.

1. None appears for the plaintiffs. Heard learned counsel for the defendant-M.T.N.L.

2. The present suit has been filed by the plaintiffs challenging the demand bill in respect of telephone charges claimed by the MTNL (defendant) being excessive one. The dispute so raised is squarely covered by the provisions of Section 7B of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885. In such a case, reference of dispute to arbitration under Section 7B of the Act is imperative.

3. A priori, in view of the mandate of Section 7B of the Act as expounded by the Apex Court in the case of Telecom District Manager Goa and ors. Vs. V.S. Dempo & Co. and ors. reported in A.I.R.1996 S.C.1545, it is

appropriate that the dispute raised in the present suit is referred to Arbitration. The reference to arbitration is for determination of dispute under Section 7B of the Act, which is a statutory remedy.

4. The Central Government shall take steps to notify the Arbitrator who in turn will try and decide the arbitration proceeding, in terms of Section 7B of the Act. That be done within eight weeks from today.

5. The defendant-M.T.N.L. shall apprise the Central Government for taking expeditious steps in the matter so that the Arbitrator is appointed within eight weeks from today.

6. It is further observed that the Arbitrator so appointed by the Central Government shall conclude the arbitration proceeding within six months from the date when he enters upon arbitration or the date on which the respective parties are expected to make first appearance before him, whichever is earlier.

7. The interim arrangement already ordered by this court shall continue till the disposal of the arbitration proceeding or till the same is modified or varied by the Arbitrator, if and when such occasion arises.

8. It is made clear that all issues raised in the present suit at the instance of either side shall be considered on merits in accordance with law in the arbitration proceedings.

9. Suit is disposed of in the above terms. Refund as per rules.

10. The counsel for the defendant-M.T.N.L. assures that intimation will be given to the Advocate for the plaintiff as well as the plaintiff forthwith about the order passed today in this suit.

(A.M. KHANWILKAR, J.)